

Council on Postsecondary Education
February 3, 2003

P-16 Council Report

The P-16 Council devoted its December meeting to two items. First, it reviewed a draft of a vision statement, action agenda, goals, and objectives and began a discussion of indicators to measure progress in achieving objectives. Second, council members heard a first-year report on the research phase of the American Diploma Project. Kentucky is one of five states participating in this national project designed to define high school work that prepares students for work or college.

Council members discussed a vision statement that calls for a “seamless system of education, from early childhood through postsecondary, that will prepare all Kentuckians to be active participants in their communities and to succeed in a knowledge-based economy.” They confirmed the three-part agenda that has organized the P-16 Council’s work since its inception in 1999: 1) the preparation and professional development of educators; 2) the alignment of competency standards between each level of the system; and 3) the elimination of barriers to student transition from preschool through college. They asked the staffs of their partner agencies to identify the particular goals for those agencies that support this three-part agenda, along with a select number of progress indicators, and to bring these to the next council meeting. The P-16 Council will focus on changes that strengthen the seams between education levels and promote successful transition to higher levels.

Council members asked that this P-16 vision and agenda be shared with legislators as they address the Commonwealth’s funding priorities during the upcoming General Assembly. The council charged its staff to draft a letter from the P-16 Council to the legislature emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to Kentucky’s educational needs as it creates the budget. The P-16 Council will encourage the General Assembly to “think P-16,” leveraging resources across education sectors to improve the educational services that Kentucky’s schools and postsecondary institutions can provide to the Commonwealth in these difficult economic times.

The council also heard the first-year report of the American Diploma Project from its executive director, Sheila Byrd, and Kati Haycock, executive director of The Education Trust, one of the ADP’s sponsoring organizations. Ms. Byrd reviewed ADP research identifying the gaps between high school and

postsecondary tests and defining standards for college-readiness developed by teams of K-12 and postsecondary educators in the five participating states. She also presented results of national employer surveys defining the skills and knowledge required to enter well-paying jobs. Educators and employers generally agree on what high school graduates need to be ready for life after high school. The research results clearly indicate some changes needed in current high school requirements and assessments in mathematics, reading, and writing to match entry-level standards for college and the skilled workforce.

Ms. Haycock presented evidence of what “tracking” does to students who are deprived of access to this type of rigorous curricula. She shared how other states have enhanced existing tests and curricula to provide rigor without raising dropout rates and suggested ways Kentucky could do the same based on the ADP research findings.

The next phase of the ADP will bring representatives of K-12, postsecondary education, adult education, business, and labor to the P-16 Council in March to review ADP recommendations and to define policy changes that the P-16 Council should take to its constituent boards to ensure high school students are prepared for work or college.

In other P-16 developments, the Kentucky Department of Education approved the Kentucky Virtual University for its list of providers of supplemental services to schools designated as Title I improvement schools in accordance with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Improvement schools are low-achieving schools in which all students are permitted to transfer to other schools, and low-income students are given access to supplemental academic services. Spearheading collaboration among Kentucky’s three “virtual sisters” (the KYVU, the Kentucky Virtual Library, and the Kentucky Virtual High School), the KYVU offers new online curricula, adapted by the KVHS’s certified teachers for Kentucky’s grade-school students. The KYVU will provide its call center and 24/7 technical support for students, teachers, and parents. Working with local public librarians, it also will offer online access to library and reference resources. This “virtual partnership” will greatly increase the scope and quality of instruction available to Kentucky’s students in low-achieving schools.

More than 1,700 seventh-graders attended the fall GEAR UP Kentucky Expos—events that encourage low-income middle school students to plan for college. The University of Louisville held the first expo November 4, and the University of Kentucky held one November 14. At each site, approximately 40 business and 30 college exhibitors talked to students about postsecondary education and career options available to them if they study hard and take challenging courses in high school. In Louisville, the program included science demonstrations and performances by UofL theater and dance troupes.

Lexington's program featured interactive presentations from the UK Center for Robotics and the UK Center for Minimally Invasive Surgery. The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority provided funds to cover student transportation and food costs. UPS, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, ITS Services, and Toyota donated prizes, including savings bonds. Western Kentucky University and Eastern Kentucky University will host the spring 2003 expos for up to 2,000 additional students.

Kentucky is one of five states selected to participate in a research project sponsored by The Education Trust. The Ed Trust is examining course-taking patterns of middle and high school students to determine the effect of college preparatory courses, especially mathematics, on college placement, as well as the effect of college-level remediation on retention and graduation rates. It also is conducting a study of student "flow" patterns and the links between teacher preparation and student achievement in selected rural districts.